

## MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ rely on God's grace (Ephesians 2:8–9).

## SCRIPTURE

JONAH 1:17–2:10



## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

This passage opens in the strangest of places, inside the belly of a big fish. Jonah acknowledged it was God who sent Jonah into the depths of the sea (v. 3). This was a consequence of Jonah's disobedience. God was disciplining one of his own to stop him from straying too far (Psalm 119:67). God's discipline is an act of love, as it is from every good father to his children he loves (Hebrews 12:5–11).<sup>1</sup> When Jonah refused to listen to God and ignored the Lord's call, God got Jonah's attention another way.

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/1065876446>

## OPENING

### WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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#### MEDIA AS STUDENTS ARRIVE

1. Play background music (optional)
2. Display **SERIES TITLE Slide** and announcement slides in a loop or customize the provided **PowerPoint**.
3. Play a 5-minute Countdown Timer 5:00 minutes before you start.

### GAME or ICE BREAKER

Based on your group's size, choose a **Game** from **Deep Discipleship Games** OR use the **Ice Breaker** prompt.

- **Game**—We recommend **Famous Last Words** or choose another screen game from **Deep Discipleship Games**
- **Ice Breaker**—What is one chore or responsibility that you procrastinate the most before finishing?

#### DEEP DISCIPLESHIP GAMES

Find free games in **Deep Discipleship Games**. It's already included with your Deep Discipleship subscription. View the game in advance in case you need supplies or slides.

### WORSHIP

Craft a time of worship with a live band or sing along to a playlist.

- Check out our curated Spotify list. We understand that every church has a different theological view of worship. These songs are suggestions, please pick what works best for your church.
- <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2xmeIKGUjkEE7bJYScbRwe?si=d254ec715a4749e5>

#### SLIDES (optional)

Use **SERIES Background & Blank Slides** or **PowerPoint** to create lyric slides.

## TRANSITION TO MESSAGE

Include a brief element that transitions students from worship to teaching time, like a prayer or video. This will keep students focused and prepared for the message while the band leaves the stage.

### VIDEO (optional)

Show **SERIES Promo Video** or **LESSON Intro Video** after the last worship song.

## MESSAGE

*Use the following teaching points and suggested illustrations as a starting point to build your message.*

### POINT 1: Rescue from the deep

Read or have someone in your group read Jonah 1:17

When Jonah volunteered to sacrifice himself and be thrown overboard (v. 1:12), it's safe to assume that he believed that was the end for him. Since it had never happened before, Jonah probably had no thought of God sending a big fish to swallow him up, rescuing him from certain death. But that's what God chose to do.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Tell a **personal story** about a time you were bailed out of a difficult/impossible situation in an improbable way.

Jonah had given up. He didn't ask to be saved (that we know of), nor did he expect it. Yet, God provided in a miraculous way. This is how God works in the lives of all who follow him. Our sin created a separation from God that was impossible for us to repair. When we were dead in our sin with no way out, God provided a way out through Jesus (Colossians 2:13).

### SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint OR the Background & Blank Slides** to create these slides to support your message:

- Jonah 1:17
- Point 1

### POINT 2: Delayed response

Read or have someone in your group read Jonah 2:1-7

The last verse of chapter one informs of how long Jonah was stuck inside the fish—three days and three nights. This doesn't necessarily mean a 72-hour time period. It could be three full nights, one full day, and two partial days. No matter the exact timeframe, it's a long time to be imprisoned in an animal's stomach.

The first verse of chapter two opens with, "Then Jonah prayed to the LORD..." This implies that Jonah was inside the fish—which must be a most unenjoyable experience—for three days before he decided to pray. He was thrashed by a storm that threatened to sink his boat (v. 1:4), but Jonah didn't pray. He was tossed overboard into a raging sea, sinking quickly (v. 1:15), but Jonah didn't pray. He was squeezed inside the belly of a fish, but still delayed in going back to God. It wasn't until he saw himself fading away to death that he decided to turn to God.

Why wait so long? Why go through all that suffering before asking God for help? We can be guilty of the same thing sometimes.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Tell a **personal story** about a time you knew the right thing you should do, but for whatever reason, chose not to do it. Talk about the consequences you faced as you put off doing the right thing. (EXAMPLE: Restoring a broken relationship, saying I'm sorry, confessing to a mistake you made, etc.)

### SLIDES (optional)

- Jonah 2:1-7
- Point 2



Too often, we view God as a last resort instead of our first option. We put off doing what we know we should, and like Jonah, we suffer as we delay in turning to the Lord.

### POINT 3: Another chance for obedience

Read or have someone in your group read Jonah 2:8–10

Jonah eventually comes to his senses and turns to God. Despite his unfaithfulness and deliberate disobedience, God forgives Jonah and gives him another chance. God speaks to the fish, and it spits Jonah out on dry land. It's interesting to note that the fish listened and obeyed God's word...the first time.

We aren't perfect and won't be on this side of eternity. While God is working us, transforming us to be more like his Son, he also knows we'll make mistakes along the way. Thankfully, he offers us another chance.

#### SLIDES (optional)

- Jonah 2:8–10
- Point 3

## CLOSING

### MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ rely on God's grace (Ephesians 2:8–9).

#### SLIDES (optional)

- Mark of a Disciple

#### FACILITATOR NOTE: DO YOU HAVE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION RIGHT AWAY?

- If YES, then **STOP HERE**, divide into groups, and provide Small Group Leaders with the **Small Group Breakout Questions** on the next page.
- If NO, then end your gathering with the **Reflect & Respond** questions and **Prayer** prompt below.

### REFLECT & RESPOND

Give the students time to silently think through what they have heard and contemplate these questions:

- In what ways has God rescued you?
- How can recognizing God's work in your past help you now and in the future?

#### SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint** OR the **Background & Blank Slides** to display the **Reflect & Respond** questions.

**FACILITATOR NOTE:** Don't rush this part. Give the students a few minutes to really consider how God has worked throughout their lives in the past.

### PRAYER

Take time to pray for your students not to delay turning toward the God who offers forgiveness and second chances.



## SMALL GROUP BREAKOUT (OPTIONAL)

*Pick a few questions from each section to discuss. Close with prayer.*

### BREAKOUT QUESTIONS

#### Build Meaningful Relationships

- **How has God shown up in your life in miraculous ways?**  
Answers will vary but remind your students of the everyday miracles like salvation, continual forgiveness, the ability to talk directly to the Creator of all things, etc.
- **Why do you think God is willing to go to such great lengths to bring us closer to him?**  
God loves us more than we can understand, and Scripture refers to him as Father, not just any father but a good one (Matthew 7:11). A good father will do anything to protect and provide for his kids.

#### Share Personal Stories & Ask Intentional Questions

- **When have you delayed in doing the right thing? What consequences did you face because of the delay?**  
Answers will vary, but examples could include not repairing a relationship you helped damage, and now the friendship is gone; someone else was blamed for a mistake you made, and because you didn't admit to what you did, the other person was punished.
- **Most of us are probably guilty of telling God, I'll do that later. At what point does delayed obedience become disobedience?**  
This is difficult to say for sure, but when God makes us aware of something we should do, he isn't hoping that we eventually get around to it. God's guidance is for the betterment of all involved. Delayed obedience only hurts us.
- **What areas of your life do you need a second chance?**  
Answers will vary. Don't rush this question. Give students time to think and respond. Come prepared with examples from your life to help get the conversation started.
- **Do you think God always gives second chances? Why or why not?**  
Because of God's infinite love, kindness, and mercy, when we repent (turn away from our sin) and seek forgiveness, God will give it (1 John 1:9).
- **What would you say to a Christ-following friend who you know is moving away from God?**  
As difficult as it may be, a good friend will speak the truth to restore their friend, but they will do so with love (Ephesians 4:15). Doing so can save your friend from a lot of pain and negative consequences (James 5:19–20).

#### Make Life Application & Hold Students Accountable

- **How can obedience to God save us from making costly mistakes?**  
God is omniscient—all-knowing (Psalms 139:1–6; Psalms 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; 1 John 3:20). He already knows what will happen from today until the end of time. This gives him the unique ability to perfectly guide our path (Proverbs 3:5–6; Psalms 32:8–10; Psalms 23:1–3).
- **What steps can you take today that will help you become a more obedient follower of God in the future?**  
Answers will vary. Mention that, like our friends, the more time we spend with God, the more we get to know him and his will—study God's Word, pray, talk with mature believers who are further along in their faith journey than you, etc.

### PRAYER

Take time to pray for your students not to delay turning toward the God who offers forgiveness and second chances.

*Use this space to keep track of any prayer requests.*

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Jon 2). Victor Books.

